



DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

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KEEP HOLIDAY WEEKEND DRIVING SAFE, CHP COMMISSIONER URGES

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is urging drivers to start a summer of safe driving this Friday night and make it last all the way through Labor Day weekend in September.

“The three-day Memorial Day weekend is the traditional starting point for the summer driving period,” CHP Commissioner Dwight Helmick said today, “and because the weather is good and people drive more, this is the time to be extra cautious.

“We’re out to make summer 2000 safer,” he added, “but we need the cooperation of every driver on the road in order to achieve it.”

The Commissioner offered some important points for drivers to follow — “Start by buckling up,” Helmick said, “every time you get into a vehicle. It doesn’t matter how long the trip is,” he added, “or whether you’re traveling on a freeway or surface street.

“Buckling up is your best protection against being thrown out of a vehicle or from the secondary collision within the vehicle — of body against steering wheel, dashboard, or other passengers. Make sure everybody else in the vehicle is buckled up as well, especially your child passengers who belong in a safety seat. And remember to use 1-800-Tell CHP to report vehicles transporting children unrestrained.”

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Helmick noted that there were 34 fatalities during last year's Memorial Day weekend. "More than half of the fatalities in CHP jurisdiction were not buckled up," he said.

"The tragedy is that 65 percent of those people would probably be alive today if only they had all been wearing safety belts."

"Don't get behind the wheel if you've been drinking," Helmick said. "And don't get into a vehicle if the driver has been drinking."

"Alcohol impairs people's judgment and reflexes long before most are feeling even a little tipsy. People need to understand they're under the influence even though they might not feel it. This is especially true when alcohol is combined with hot summer days."

The Commissioner also cautioned those planning to travel to the beach, mountains or other popular holiday spots to start early, allow extra time for the additional traffic and avoid driving long distances without proper rest. "Too many collisions are caused by people who are tired or impatient, and as a result they drive aggressively," he said. "Don't be one of these during this Memorial Day weekend — or at any other time."

"Beginning at 6:01 p.m. on Friday, May 26, until midnight on Monday, May 29, our officers will mount a maximum enforcement effort to ensure our highways are free of speeders, impaired drivers and all others whose driving poses a risk to themselves or other motorists," Helmick concluded.

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